The

Arabian Mission

Field Report

Number Twenty-Three

July 1 to September 30, 1897
THE ARABIAN MISSION.

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In writing to non-residents at this time of the year, one generally begins with an expression of thankfulness that the summer is over; that the past season has been comparatively cool is also cause for rejoicing. Perhaps some will be interested to know that for the months of June, July and August the averages of highest temperature during the day were 100, 103½, 102; and the lowest during the night, 84, 86½, 84. But there is an end even to the Busrah summer, and now that we have moved down from the roof and up from the basement, we feel more like ourselves and ready for a more active life.

As I wrote in my last letter, the local feature of the month of June was the celebration of the Queen's Jubilee. On July 4th we Yankees had our turn—a dinner at the United States Consulate, after a formal reception in the morning. There were only two of us, but doubtless we "spread-eagled" enough to cause our fewness in number to be overlooked.

Towards the end of July Dr. Worrall went to Muscat, and for the remainder of the quarter I was alone. It does not seem proper economy to have such a large mission building as ours for only one man, but I trust it will be remedied by adding men rather than by cutting off rooms.

Our religious services during the quarter were maintained as usual, except that the presence of English gunboats in the river gave us larger audiences, both on board and when we invited them to worship with us in our Chapel. The first Sunday, when between thirty and forty blue jackets in uniform came marching up to our
door, it created quite a sensation in the town, and many were the questions asked about their business. As Englishmen are popularly supposed not to pray, even on Sunday, doubtless many thought the house was being garrisoned, preparatory to the outbreak of hostilities between Great Britain and Turkey. Our harbor work has been greatly helped by the gift of a box of books and magazines from the St. Andrew's Mission for Seamen, London. Although we have seen only one American vessel here during the past year, yet our home papers are quite acceptable to all English speaking sailors, and if any of our friends can spare old files of *Christian Heralds* or similar papers, we will be very glad to receive them.

We felt it a great loss, that with the closing of the dispensary our daily religious services with the patients also had to be given up. Now that Dr. Worrall is returning they will soon begin again.

The Bible sales have been fairly good for the summer. A five days' tour down the river was quite successful. Usually we send out the colporteurs two by two, but this time Daniel went alone. Having the mission boat and our own boatmen, he was not afraid. We will use our little mission boat for such extended tours more and more, and our thanks are continually due to the Sunday-school of the Protestant College of Beirut, who gave us the money for its purchase.

In my last quarter's letter, I spoke about an enquirer whom we will call Ahmed. He shortly returned to his home at Amara. Perhaps I can best give further news of him by translating from the letters of our assistant in charge.

**July 24th.**—If you ask me about Saiyed Ahmed, he comes, and as I see, he is glad in the religion, and from the day he came from you he is changed and seems better. We see that his brother has become angry about him, and he says to me, “You have made my brother a Protestant.” And two others wish to come to me, but fear has prevented them.

**July 31st.**—If you ask about Ahmed Kassal (Ahmed the butcher) he comes always to the shop when it is eleven o'clock (5 p.m.). I take him and we go to the fields, and read and pray together. Oh, sir! I believe he earnestly loves the religion and does not fear anyone at all.

**Aug. 14th.**—If you ask about brother Ahmed every day he
"ARABS AT BUSRAH ON THE RIVER."
comes to the book-shop, and the people revile him much; and a certain one of the Muslims, like a public cryer, calls out in the Bazaar: "Ahmed Kassal, do not take from him meat, for he has become a Protestant." And about his wife, she wishes to leave him because the women say to her, "Your man has become a Protestant," and she continually says to brother Ahmed, "Give me my dower and I will go away from you." Oh, sir! he will shortly come to you, and I beseech you to speak comfortably and spiritually with him. And because of him there is upon me much opposition, but our Saviour Jesus Christ will save us.

His wife and most of his property were finally taken from him, and in September our assistant Murad writes: "And concerning our brother Ahmed in these days there is upon him a great persecution, but he is enduring it. He says: 'I have given myself to the Saviour, and He is able to save me from my enemies.' I beseech you always to remember us in your prayers that soon there may be freedom, and that this brother be strengthened in the true faith."

Will not our friends in America also offer this prayer?

Concerning the work in Amara, Murad also writes: To-day came to me a learned man of the Muslims of Amara, and said to me: "What is your thought; do you wish to make Muslims Protestants?" I answered him, "Yes, that is our thought." And he said, "Give me a Gospel, I would read in it," and I gave him. Murad is a good man and is doing a good work, some of the difficulties of which will be shown by the following. Oh, sir, there are people who wish to meet with us for prayer, but we have no place. I take them to the fields and we pray together, but there is great fear because of the government. One day I was sitting in the fields, I and Ahmed, and my son David, and a Chaldean christian, and a Muslim, by name Hameedi. I saw a soldier of the government coming to sit with us. We knew that he was a spy to see what were our actions. We soon began to pray, and after we had finished, he said: "Is this your prayer?" We replied "Yes," and he said, "It is very, very good." At every petition in our prayer he would say "Amen, Amen," and we rejoiced exceedingly. I inform you on Friday came together about forty people, some sitting in the shop, others standing before the door. I talked with them on religion. One of them said, "This is the truth," and some of them took books and read. Oh, sir, I feared very much, but the Protector, He is God. I thank God that in that day I sold nine books, some to Muslims and some to Jews.
The above extracts from Murad's letters need little or no comment. They show what a need there is for faith and prayer, and how withal we may thank God and take courage.

Our out-station at this place, begun so auspiciously a few months ago, has, under God's blessing, made good progress during the past quarter. The book sales, both scriptures and controversial, have been larger than we expected, and the opposition of the enemy has been restrained by a gracious providence. Let me translate again, this time from Esa's letters. "Very many came to the shop for religious talks and questions on the Divinity of Christ. I have a hope that God will do great things in this place. A few days ago the Mufti (a very high official in the Mohammedan faith) and an officer of the soldiers, came to the shop and sat down, and read and talked. Many passing by stopped to wonder at the Mufti's being seen in a Bible shop, and afterwards I heard one man say, "What is the matter with the Government, we never have permitted one of the rival sects of Islam to gain a footing here, and now, behold, there is a Protestant Bible shop, and no one drives them away."

Perhaps you may remember in previous letters our referring to the Subees, or Disciples of St. John. There is a small colony of them at Nasareeyeh, and of them Esa writes: "While I was waiting, the Subees came to me and said, "Tomorrow is the first day of the week, come to us and bring with you the Gospel and read to us, and we will all of us come together in one place." Another day the Subees came to me and said, "We wish to become Christians;" I replied, "You are welcome;" and they said, "But you must write our names in the Government register and make us a Protestant community, and open a school for our boys; if not, what is the use of our coming?" Of these people Esa also writes, saying, "These people are like the Arabs and there is little difference between them, and if they are taught and become real Christians, it will benefit us very much in our work among the Arabs of the desert."

You can see in reading the above extracts how the work at Nasareeyeh is developing and how much it needs wise guidance. If we only had a missionary whom we could place there for a few months. And Esa also writes as did Murad about their being no place at which to pray. Our assistants hire their own houses, which means that they live in but one room, to which they cannot
ask others to come. We trust that our mission will be able both at Amara and Nasareeyeh to buy or rent a small native house, where there will be a place for private or public prayer, and where, when our missionaries go to spend a few days or a few weeks they will find a more comfortable resting place than that afforded by the public "Khan" of the East.  

James Cantine.

MUSCAT.

Rather than give a more formal report this quarter we prefer to give a few incidents in connection with our work.

On July 3d, perhaps the hottest day in the year, when, even at midnight, mercury recorded 106°, the deed of sale of the Mission House was executed at the British Consulate. The house and compound was purchased for 1,433½ Maria Theresa dollars. The half dollar added is a Hindu custom of superstitious rather than rational origin. Arabia has no gold or silver coins of its own, and must therefore use those of other countries; near the Turkish border Turkish coins are used, while where there is trade with India the rupee holds sway. In Central Arabia, however, as well as in Oman, the Austrian, or "Maria Theresa" dollar is the current coin. As far as I know only one coin is minted in all Arabia. This is the copper piece stamped with the name of the Sultan of Muscat, giving Muscat a "copper standard currency." The rupee and the dollar vary daily, but the Muscat pice or "besa" has always the same purchasing power.

As soon as the Mission House was made over to the Arabian Mission by deed of sale doubly sealed and registered, I was able to go out on a tour along the coast. At this time of the year a slight monsoon breeze renders the little coast villages somewhat cooler than enclosed Muscat.

Bostan, which we had visited before, is one of a series of these miniature villages, the population of each of which is perhaps not more than twenty-five or thirty people all told. Accessible only by difficult mountain passes, or by sea—sometimes only by sea—these villagers live an entirely secluded life, and become true children of nature. Imagine what the visit of a European, with a lantern, folding-chair, books, and other wonderful things, means to such people.
According to our ability we did not fail to tell them also "the wonderful words of life."

We coasted down slowly, stopping at a number of these little villages at all times of the day or night, as the winds favored or hindered us.

Kuryat is the first town of important size—often visited before. Here we intended to spend a longer time, but what at Muscat seemed only a slight swelling on my right hand proved to be two whitlows, and I was compelled to return to Muscat to have them properly treated. Muscat is favored in having a good native hospital, the Consular Surgeon having years ago begun this charitable work for the poor. The Sultan donated a building suitable for both hospital and dispensary.

There happened to be at the hospital, which I was compelled to visit oftener than usual, a party of Arabs from Abu Thabi, one of the chief towns of the once notorious pirate coast—visited at one time by one of our colporteurs, but not as yet by any missionary. Steamers call there occasionally now, and it seems another "open door" on the East coast of Arabia, which should at least be visited if not occupied by missionaries.

One of this Abu Thabi party had been shot in a fray, and as boiled onions and butter, or a lump of fresh dates—their usual specific—failed to extract the bullet, they came to Muscat. The operation was successfully performed by Surg. Col. Jayaker, and while the patient, an old warrior, was convalescing I enjoyed many an interesting hour with them. The old warrior had lost none of his spirit, and his entire interest seemed to be centered in examining the new cartridge rifles, of which Muscat in late years has become the emporium for all Arabia. In fact, the main object of their visit seemed to be to supply their tribe with rifles of the newer pattern. Speaking to them of a Book which spoke of a time when men should "learn war no more," they were much interested and gladly received the fine large type Scriptures I gave them.

Dr. Worrall visited Muscat for a month and gave a new impetus to the work at a time when I was well nigh disabled by the heat, and I, later on, made a vacation tour to India, where at Lahore and Amritsar I saw much of the encouraging and successful work among Indian Moslems.
During my absence our colporteur, Jusef, made two tours—one to Sur and another to Kuryat. He was favored by a passage on a British gunboat going to Sur—perhaps the first time that a gunboat brought Bibles to this old slave import town.

At Kuryat, where I had been able to do so little, he remained some time, visiting also the mountain villages beyond.

The total Scripture sales for this quarter amounted to over 250.

The boys in our Freed Slave School have made steady progress, and show that they appreciate the advantages they enjoy. But this is by no means the only result of the opening of a school for freed slaves. The indirect influence of the school, especially upon the large negro population of Muscat, is larger, perhaps, than our expectations. Their laugh at my attempt to educate slaves has changed to an earnest inquiry on the part of some, why their children as well should not be taught to read and write and be kept from pilfering in the bazaars. Many an evening my African neighbors gather to hear the freed slave boys sing, and only their Moslem mullahs prevent a regular evening gathering of the free-born negroes of Muscat.

A regular evangelistic service for this class is our hope in the near future.

P. J. Zwemer.